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14 SOME LIKE IT HOT

DATE 1959 **DVD DISTRIBUTOR** TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX
RELEASED JULY 24 **DIRECTOR** BILLY WILDER
STARRING MARILYN MONROE, TONY CURTIS, JACK LEMMON,
 JOE E. BROWN, GEORGE RAFT, PAT O'BRIEN



THE STORY

JOE (CURTIS) AND JERRY (LEMMON), TWO struggling musicians, witness the 1929 St. Valentine's Massacre and try to find a way out of Chicago before they are hunted down by the mob and killed. The only job that will pay them is in an all-girl band, so they dress up as two women. As Josephine and Daphne they set off by

train with the band for Miami. Once there, Joe falls in lust with the lead singer Sugar (Monroe), but he can't tell her his real gender, and Jerry collects a rich male suitor (Brown) who will not take "no" for an answer. However, their problems really start when the mob come to town for a conference.

THE SUBTEXT

SHOT IN BLACK AND WHITE, WILDER IS clearly harking back to the Screwball comedies of the 1930s by Capra and Hawks. But Wilder's work eschews straightforward romance in favour of a satire which comments on money, corruption, mistaken identity and gender-bending. In Wilder's world the men aren't heroes, and the

women aren't perfect - in fact, sometimes they aren't women at all. All of the characters are not only hiding something, but they also have a hidden agenda, as did the homosexual Wilder. The movie is laden with risqué sexual references, all them cleverly hidden in a witty script which tells us subterfuge is a necessary evil.

KEY PLAYERS

BILLY WILDER BEGAN HIS FILM CAREER IN the German cinema of the 1920s, and you can see it reflected in the moody lighting, penchant for film noir and cynicism of much of his material (*Sunset Boulevard*, *Double Indemnity*, *Lost Weekend*). In the 1950s, however, his writing collaboration with Charles Brackett came to an

end and Wilder turned his attention to satirical comedies but his theme remained the same - the isolation and shallowness of modern living. This was Monroe's second movie with Wilder (the other being *The Seven Year Itch*) and she was already in trouble, with famous stories of one scene needing over 80 takes.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

THE SCENE WHERE JOE, A NOTORIOUS ROGUE, persuades Sugar to accompany him on someone else's yacht. He explains to her that he is impotent because "Mother Nature" threw him a "dirty curve" since his tragic accident befell his beloved bespangled girlfriend Nellie. She plunged into the Grand Canyon as they were about to kiss. Since

then he claims he has been "numb" and that no amount of "French upstairs maids" could 'cure' him. Sugar is mortified and becomes determined to cure him of his 'numbness' by draping herself over Joe's prone body and passionately kissing him. He pretends the kisses are having no effect, while his glasses steam up more and more.

FACT FILE

- The Mirisch brothers, Wilder's bankrollers, wanted Bob Hope and Danny Kaye for the men's roles. Wilder thought of Frank Sinatra, but when the singer didn't turn up, he moved on to Curtis.
- Curtis and Lemmon were schooled in effeminism by the legendary drag artiste Barbette (Vander Clyde).

- Orry Kerry, who dressed all three stars and won a best costume Oscar, had the cheek to tell Monroe that Curtis' bum was better than hers. She promptly opened her blouse and retorted, "Well, he doesn't have tits like these."
- The final line, "Nobody's perfect," is one of the most remembered in the movies.

WORDS: BEN WALSH